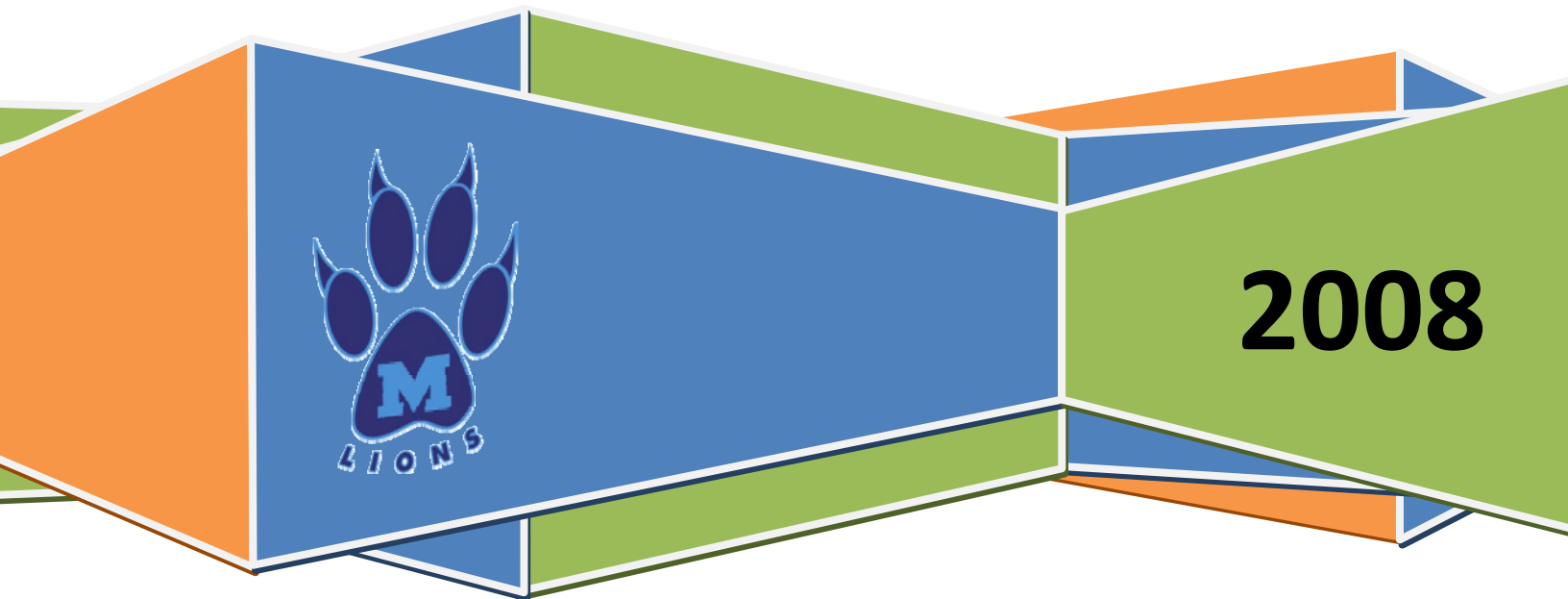


Mississauga Secondary School – [www.msslions.ca](http://www.msslions.ca)

# Getting Ready for the OSSLT

Literacy Test Primer



THE LITERACY TEST IS ON THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008

# Getting Ready for the OSSLT

March 2008

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## What is the OSSLT?

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is a provincial test of literacy (reading and writing) skills that students have acquired by Grade 10. It is based on the literacy skills in the Ontario Curriculum across all subject areas up to the end of Grade 9. It also provides the Ontario education system with accurate, comparable data with which to assess current policies and curriculum. Students who do not pass the OSSLT can retake it a number of times. Students who have been eligible to write the OSSLT at least twice and have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to fulfill the requirement through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). Successful completion of the OSSLT or OSSLC is a graduation requirement.

The test is written in one morning. For this school year, it will be held on **March 27**. Students must complete two test booklets. Each booklet is comprised of both reading and writing sections. Attendance for this test is mandatory!

## What will the test include?

The test is designed to include questions that test both the reading and writing abilities of students. The test has short and long writing tasks, and multiple-choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life.

In reading, students are given examples of different types of reading selections:

- the information paragraph
- a news report
- dialogue
- real-life narrative
- graphic selection

Students are then tested on their comprehension of what they have read.

Students are required to demonstrate their writing skills through different formats:

- short writing tasks that require a response in six lines
- a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- a news report
- a summary

There are also multiple-choice questions testing writing skills.

### Specific Tasks:

- 5 reading passages
- 10 questions related to readings. Students are given 6 lines on which to answer in sentences
- 48 multiple choice questions related to the readings
- 54 questions based on grammar, spelling and reading and writing skills
- 2 short writing tasks
- 2 long writing tasks



## Reading on the OSSLT

The OSSLT's informational, narrative and graphic reading selections focus on three reading skills. To be successful on these readings you will have to:

- understanding *explicitly* (**directly, literally**) stated ideas and information
- understanding *implicitly* (**indirectly, inferences**) stated ideas and information
- make *connections* (**interpretations**) between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience

The reading selections include:

- **information paragraph:** presents ideas and information on a topic
- **news report:** presents information in the form of a news story
- **dialogue:** presents a conversation between two or more people
- **real-life narrative:** an account of a significant time in an individual's life
- **graphic text:** presents ideas and information with the help of graphic features, such as diagrams, photographs, drawings, sketches, patterns, timetables, maps, charts or tables

## Types of Reading Questions

Types of questions

1. **Multiple-choice**
  - Each reading text is followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. Students select the best or most correct answer from a list of four options.
2. **Open-response**
  - The information paragraph
  - News report
  - One or two open response questions. Students construct a response based on the reading selection. They should respond on the six lines provided.



## Reading tips for the test

### 1. Multiple Choice

- Read the entire question carefully.
- Choose the most correct answer.
- When you are asked to provide the "best meaning" of a word "as used in" the reading selection, refer back to the selection and choose the option that describes the word as used in that specific sentence.

### 2. Written Answers

- Read each question carefully.
- Since this is a reading test, many questions may be answered in a single word or phrase.
- The space provided indicates the approximate length of the answer expected.
- When a question requires you to give a reason or explain your answer, consider including the word "because" in your answer.



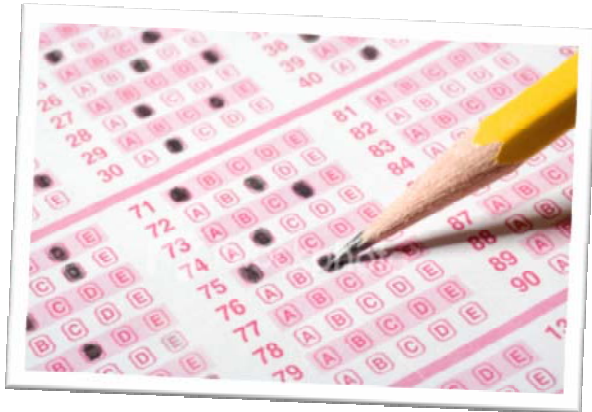
## Reading Tips for the Test Cont...

### Graphical Text

- Get an idea about the information in the reading section by scanning the text and the pictures before you attempt to answer the question.
- Attempt to block out sections of the graphical text when attempting to answer a question so you are not distracted by the rest of the images and words on the page.
- Read one question at a time.
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question.



**NOTE: You do not have to read the entire text before you begin to answer the questions.**



### Informational Text

- Read the entire selection.
- Look at the graphic(s) to get additional information.
- Read one question at a time.
- Record your answer to the question.
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question.
- Go to the next question

**NOTE: Answer the questions based on your reading of the selection, not just your general knowledge of the topic.**

### Literary Text

- Read the entire selection.
- Read one question at a time.
- Record your answer to the question.
- Go to the next question.
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question.

**NOTE: Answer the questions based on your reading of the selection, not just your general knowledge of the topic.**





# The SQ3R Strategy and the Literacy Test

## Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review

### S stands for SURVEY

Look around the page for clues:

1. Check out the title – they will give you clues about the reading.
2. Notice any words in bold, underlined, or set aside in sub-headings: this is how the author has organized his or her work.
3. Notice any graphics (pictures, charts, illustrations): they are there to give you clues and support the reading.
4. Look at the questions the OSSLT asks you – this will help you spot the answers as you read.

### Q stands for QUESTION

1. While you are surveying, change the titles, headings, or subheadings into questions.
2. Ask yourself, “What do I already know about this topic?”

### R1 stands for READ

As you read:

1. Look for answers to the questions you created and the answers to the OSSLT questions – underline the answers if you find them!
2. Re-read the captions under pictures graphs.
3. Read more slowly for difficult sections.
4. Stop and re-read any sentences or paragraphs which aren’t clear.

### R2 stands for RECITE

At the end of each section (e.g. each paragraph):

1. Ask yourself “Have I answered the questions I created?”
2. Write down any confusing passages in your own words.

### R3 stands for REVIEW

At the end of the reading selection:

1. Look at the questions the OSSLT asked.
2. Complete the answers to the questions you know immediately.
3. Go back and look at your underlining or highlighting – do these sections help you answer the questions?
4. Re-read difficult sections to help you answer the reading questions you had not answered immediately.



**Notes:**





## Writing on the OSSLT

The test has short and long writing tasks, and multiple-choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner
- using conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication

It is important that you follow the instructions and write in the required form. Read the assigned topic for each task carefully before you begin to write. Make sure your work is on-topic and is in the required form. For the long and short writing tasks, use full and correctly written sentences.

The four tasks are of different types that represent the range of writing required in school and daily life:

- a summary
- a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- a news report
- an information paragraph.

## Basic Tips for Students Writing the OSSLT

- All writing tasks must be written in complete sentences.

The purpose and audience for your writing are indicated in the instructions preceding each writing task. You will notice that the audience is always an adult. This indicates that the language in your writing should be standard Canadian English and your ideas should be appropriate for an adult audience. Offensive or inappropriate language and ideas are not acceptable.

- There is to be absolutely **NO** webspeak, slang, jargon or abbreviations used on the literacy test.

Each writing task is different. It is important to follow the instructions for each task. For example, the information paragraph must be written in a single paragraph. The series of paragraphs expressing an opinion asks for a minimum of three paragraphs. You may write more than three, but do not write fewer than three paragraphs.

Some Basic things to keep in mind:

- Paragraph divisions must be **clear**. You may choose to use indentations or to leave an extra line between paragraphs.
- Be sure to **write** on the given topic in the form required by the **task instructions**.
- Writing that is off-topic or not in the specified form will receive a **failing mark**. Note: The series of paragraphs expressing an opinion is the only writing task that focuses on your opinion.
- To help your reader follow and understand your written work, **organize** your ideas clearly. Use **transitions** to link your ideas.
- The space provided for your written work indicates the **approximate length** of the writing required. Your writing skills cannot be assessed if you have not written enough.
- Make sure your **handwriting is clear**. Make changes to your writing as neatly and clearly as you can. Illegible handwriting cannot be marked.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are communicated clearly.

## Tips for Writing a Summary

### Before You Begin to Write

- While reading the original text, underline, circle or highlight important words.
- Find the main idea of the text and at least two important details that support it. Take into account the whole text.
- Plan your summary using the Rough Notes space provided beside the text you are summarizing.

### While You Write

- Write your summary in complete sentences in the lined space provided.
- You can reduce the number of words in several ways. These include leaving out nonessential information and unnecessary words, using one general word to substitute for several specific words and reducing the number of examples.
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your summary. Use transitions to link your ideas.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.



## Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

### Before you Begin to Write

- Determine your opinion on the topic question and consider your reasons for thinking this way.
- Form a plan.

### While you are Writing

- Write your series of paragraphs in complete sentences on the lined pages provided.
- In the introductory paragraph, clearly present your opinion; your opinion is your main idea.
- In the body paragraph(s), include supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.) that explain and give reasons for your opinion. In order to include enough supporting details, each body paragraph requires several sentences.
- In the concluding paragraph, summarize your opinion.
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your opinion. Use transitions to link your ideas.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.





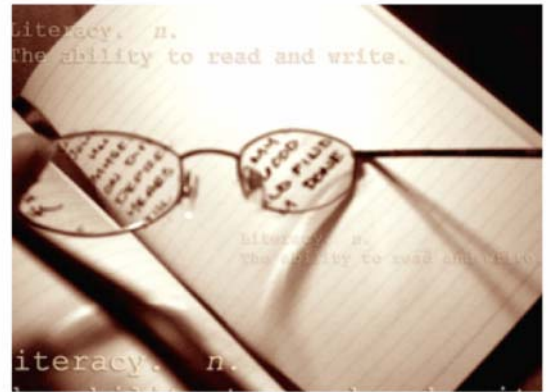
## Tips for Writing a Newspaper Report

### Before you begin to write

- Study the headline and picture to get ideas about an event that you will make up for your news report.
- Plan your news report. Think of some specific facts and information that answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Remember, you have to make up the facts and information. Jot down your ideas in the Rough Notes space.

### When you write

- Write your news report in complete sentences in the lined space provided.
- Write enough to ensure that your reader will feel fully informed about the event.
- Include quotations from participants in the event or bystanders.
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your news report. Use transitions to link your ideas.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.



## Tips for a Short Writing Task

### Before you begin to write

- Remember that you are limited by the number of lines available in the writing booklets.
- You will want to focus on using about five (5) sentences

### When you write

- Write your short writing task in complete sentences in the lined space provided.
- In your topic sentence, clearly state the main idea about the specific aspect of the topic you selected
- In the next two or three sentences, include information on 2-3 supporting points
- In your concluding sentence, summarize your main idea.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.



## Further Information:

Come and checkout the other amazing supports we have for you to access on our school website.

# www.msslions.ca

1. **On Test Day**
  - A brief overview of what to expect and who is eligible to write.
2. **2008 OSSLT - Getting Ready Guide**
  - Test Instructions, important reading skills needed for the test, tips for reading during the test, writing skills required for the test, tips for writing responses on the test and some brief FAQ's are included in this document.
3. **Key Words Worth Being Familiar With**
  - Important key words to trigger students when they see them on the OSSLT. View the accompanying video for further explanation.
4. **2008 Sample Literacy Test**
  - This is a great practice aid and is recommended for all students!
5. **2008 Sample Blank Multiple Choice Response Sheet**
  - Use this sheet for all of the multiple choice sections of the 2008 sample test
6. **2008 Sample Multiple Choice Answer Key**
  - Use this file to score student responses on Multiple Choice questions
7. **OSSLT On-Line Test Preparation (WOW!)**
  - The OLC has put together a fantastic resource to assist students in practicing and preparing for the test. Sample readings with questions and answers are provided along with writing exercises.
8. **Cawthra Park Sample Literacy Test**
  - Similar to the ILC site above, but some relevant practice material created by Peel teachers.
9. **Hints for Multiple Choice Tests**
  - Do you often get to 2 options a can't pick the right one? Check this sheet out for some pointers.
10. **Characteristics of Successful/Unsuccessful Students on the OSSLT**
  - Find out what it takes to pass the OSSLT on the first try!
11. **How to Write a Summary**
  - You need to be able to do this on the OSSLT
12. **Durham Region's - Getting Ready**
  - An online test preparation tool that provides information on the valuable skills of reading and writing.  
*Username: student*  
*Password: readwrite*
13. **Three Levels of Questions**
  - Get a heads' up regarding the levels of questions on the OSSLT
14. **EQAO Reading Section - Tips for Students**
  - **How to answer multiple choice questions on the OSSLT**
15. **EQAO - Written Response Tips**
  - How to complete written responses properly on the OSSLT
16. **Language of Questioning, Thinking and Evaluation**
  - Learn how the OSSLT asks questions and the answer they want from you by understanding key words
17. **Tips for Reading Graphical Texts**
  - Mixed media readings will be on the test. Find out how to read them
18. **How to Write Newspaper Articles**
  - Cover all the basics of the newspaper report. A must have skill for the OSSLT
19. **Checklist for A Supported Opinion Essay/Response**
  - This will tell you exactly what you need to do for the opinion piece on the OSSLT



**See Mr. Pearson, Third Floor, Global Studies if you have any questions!**

Get more help and information on the Literacy Test by visiting **www.msslions.ca**